



RECENT PUBLIC BUILDINGS OF LONDON.

NO. 11.—THE ALFRED LIFE OFFICE, LOTHBURY.

Scale.

THE Alfred Life Office, of the front elevation of which we this week present our readers with an engraving, is an example of how much may be effected at a moderate expense, and with common materials, by a man of taste relying upon his own resources, rather than miserably imitating the inventions of his predecessors. Adaptations of the ancient edifices are seldom successful; many of the best specimens that have been produced in the present day, approaching very nearly to the servility of copyism. The Travellers' Club House is the best example with which we are acquainted. The Reform is an improvement upon the design which it is said formed Mr. Barry's model. But in both these instances great wealth was at the architect's command wherewith to produce corresponding magnificence, and taste rather than economy was the governing principle. In those buildings which are appropriated to the purposes of commerce, such facilities are seldom afforded for the man of genius to avail himself of in the preparation of his design; and, whatever may be the space allowed him, external effect is generally sacrificed to the arrangement of an interior crammed with diminutive rooms, in which any marked display of style or decoration is not even attempted to be attained.

And not only do these circumstances operate unfavourably for architectural effect, but even when a considerable outlay is resolved upon, and much expense is incurred in decoration, architects too frequently forget that demand for originality which the nature of the building creates. In too many instances, a few overgrown columns on a tilted basement, and with two or three tiers of windows between them, are the only evidences that an architect has been employed. Costliness is the criterion of merit, stone rather than style is matter of commendation, and people judge of the importance of a building rather from its materials than its design.

Such, however, is not likely to be the fate of the Alfred Life Office, since the materials are of the most common description, while the design is more than usually meritorious. Considering that the architect had a frontage of no more than twenty-eight feet, that considerable light was required to each story, thus materially trenching upon the repose of the building; and that very little expense could be spared for decoration; his production will be found to possess a consistency and marked character no less pleasing than uncommon. It is unnecessary to enter into a detailed description, as the engraving is sufficiently accu-

rate to enable our readers to appreciate the merits of the design. Perhaps more breadth might have been given to the piers of the windows in the upper stories, but as this could not be afforded, from the diminution of light which it would have occasioned, this defect is rather a misfortune than a fault. One peculiarity, which the drawing is too small to shew, is the manner in which the angles of the ground-floor piers are treated, a small circular shaft, terminating in a leaf, being placed in a recess formed for the purpose. The angles are thus preserved from the mutilation to which, had they terminated with the usual sharp arris, they would have been subjected. Indeed, careful study has been bestowed upon every part of this exterior, and as a whole it is a credit to the architect, and an ornament to the city.

The whole of the front, with the exception of the quoins on the ground story, which are of stone, and scarcely distinguishable from the other portions, is executed in the metallic cement left unpainted, and certainly producing a very satisfactory effect. Messrs. Lee were the builders, and Mr. Harrison, of Finsbury-street, the plasterer under whose immediate superintendence the front was stuccoed. The architect is Mr. H. Clutton, of St. Martin's-place, to whose kindness we are indebted for the drawing from which the accompanying engraving was prepared.

W. C.

NEW DOCKS, LIVERPOOL.—Mr. Hartley, the surveyor to the Dock Estate, has reported on the necessity of a large extension of the dock accommodation of the port of Liverpool. Of fourteen docks in existence, he says not one could be let dry for the purpose of repairs. After recommending several alterations and connection of docks, he proposes that a large graving dock for large steamers should be constructed, together with such other graving dock accommodation as the general wants of the port require. The dock committee have decided, to purchase for these purposes, land from the Harrington Dock Company to the extent of 127,700 yards, at 11. 11s. 6d. per yard! Other land will be bought of the corporation, and also of Mr. John Shaw Leigh; so that we may expect great activity very shortly.

NEW WATER-WORKS, LIVERPOOL.—Mr. Simpson, from London, is now engaged in Liverpool making surveys and forming plans for the better supply of water for extinguishing fires &c., so that Liverpool has taken up the subject in the right spirit, and as ought to be done here in London and in every large city. Some umbrage is taken by the Liverpool engineers at the employment of a stranger,—we know not whether justly or not,—but we certainly should have thought Liverpool itself had been sufficient for all its own wants in this respect.

JUNCTION OF THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC OCEANS.—The long-meditated project of piercing the Isthmus of Panama, for the junction of the two great oceans, is daily more and more attracting the attention of nations, as its importance is continually enhanced by the new relations which the gigantic conquests of discovery abroad and science at home are establishing between the various portions of the globe. In addition to the active inquiries and experiments in which, as is well known to our readers, both England and America have long been engaged with this view, the French government has now despatched a mining engineer of distinction, M. Napoleon Garella, to make a careful examination of the Isthmus, and report on the most eligible direction which a canal of communication between the Atlantic and Pacific can take.

TEMPLE CHURCH.—On Sunday morning this church, which had been closed since August for the purpose of repairs, was reopened for divine service. A large number of benches, of the respective houses, and many templars, were present. Considerable improvements have taken place since the church has been closed, and a new pulpit, designed by Mr. Smirke, richly ornamented with carved work, has been erected. Benches for the accommodation of the choir have also been erected, which are ornamented with carved figures of angels with wings expanded. Adjoining the north transept, two rooms for the use of the choir have been erected, and the church has undergone a thorough cleansing.